

THE BLIND CAN DO A JOB FOR
INDUSTRY

W.P. Greer

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The Blind Can Do a Job For Industry

W. P. GREER

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In the State of Ohio during the year 1946 there were 163 clients of the State Rehabilitation Services for the Blind placed in employment, both in special workshops and in private business and industry. Of this number, 76 were in industry, three in clerical jobs, two in rural work, 13 in professional positions, 10 in their own businesses, 33 in subsidized employment, including vending stands, seven in commercial activities, such as selling, and 19 in miscellaneous types of employment.

In placing the visually handicapped it is wise to set up a vocational objective and seek employment in the same field of work in which the person has had experience before his vision was impaired. If feasible jobs are not available in a vocation in which he has had successful experience, the next source of employment opportunities considered would be in a field of work related to the person's past work experience or his special interest.

This is illustrated by the case of the middle-aged man in central Ohio who had been a construction electrician for

many years, earning upwards of \$6,000 per year. Upon losing his vision, due to glaucoma and optic atrophy, he became very dejected and felt that he would never be able to work again and continue supporting his wife and three children. Through intelligent counseling he welcomed an opportunity to do exploratory work in the repairing of electrical appliances in the orientation center for the blind at Goodwill Industries of Dayton. Here he learned to use the tools of the trade as a blind person, and regained confidence in himself to the point that the industrial placement specialist was able to place him in private industry as a sign construction electrician, at a wage of sixty dollars per week. On this job he assembles the many hidden parts in the construction of large building-front neon signs. During the six months he has been on this job he has received periodic raises in pay and is now supervising the work of two other men in his department. The officials of the company have indicated that they will hire another blind person with equal skills.

This rehabilitated case also points out vividly the importance of making good use of an orientation center where a newly blinded person can adjust at his own speed, and learn to do things properly without vision. His association with other persons having a similar handicap was of immeasurable value and allowed him to be placed in the best suitable type of employment.

At the Cleveland Convention of the Northern Ohio Personnel and Executive Directors' Association held in June, 1947 the exhibit of "Blind People Serving Industry," jointly sponsored by the Ohio Rehabilitation Services for the Blind and the Cleveland Society for the Blind, was awarded a trophy for being the most practical and serviceable to employers. The display centered around two blind workmen, both Rehabilitation clients. One was from the field of industry, doing his job of hand broaching tiny electric motor bearings with the use of an arbor press and the other from the Sheltered Workshop of the Cleveland Society for the Blind, performing an assembly job on an electrical fixture. The cuts accompanying this article show the two men at work in the Convention exhibit.



Scobey Rogers is in the act of making minor adjustments on a lock switch which is part of his recently invented and manufactured "Kall-Master". The "Kall-Master" is a device to be installed on busses for advertising and station announcements. They have been installed on urban and interurban busses for a trial period, and indications are that it will prove to be extremely valuable in the accommodation of customers.

is a chess player and is probably proudest of his set of chessmen which he made out of brass.

Scobey is a charter member of Tennessee Beta Chapter of Tau Beta Pi, national honorary scholastic fraternity, is a member of both the American Society of Mechanical Engineering and the American Society of Tool Engineering. He attained the rank of Eagle Scout and is now committeeman for a local scout troop. He was the first Boy Scout in Nashville to receive either the Gold Quill Award (Journalism) or the Scout Organizer Award. He believes the Boy

Scout organization has helped him more than any one thing. Of course, he said that if it had not been for the law pertaining to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation he would not have been able to go to college.

Rogers is single but says he is still trying. At the present time most of his affections are bestowed upon "Putt-Putt", his large gray cat.

He thinks employers should give more consideration to handicapped per-

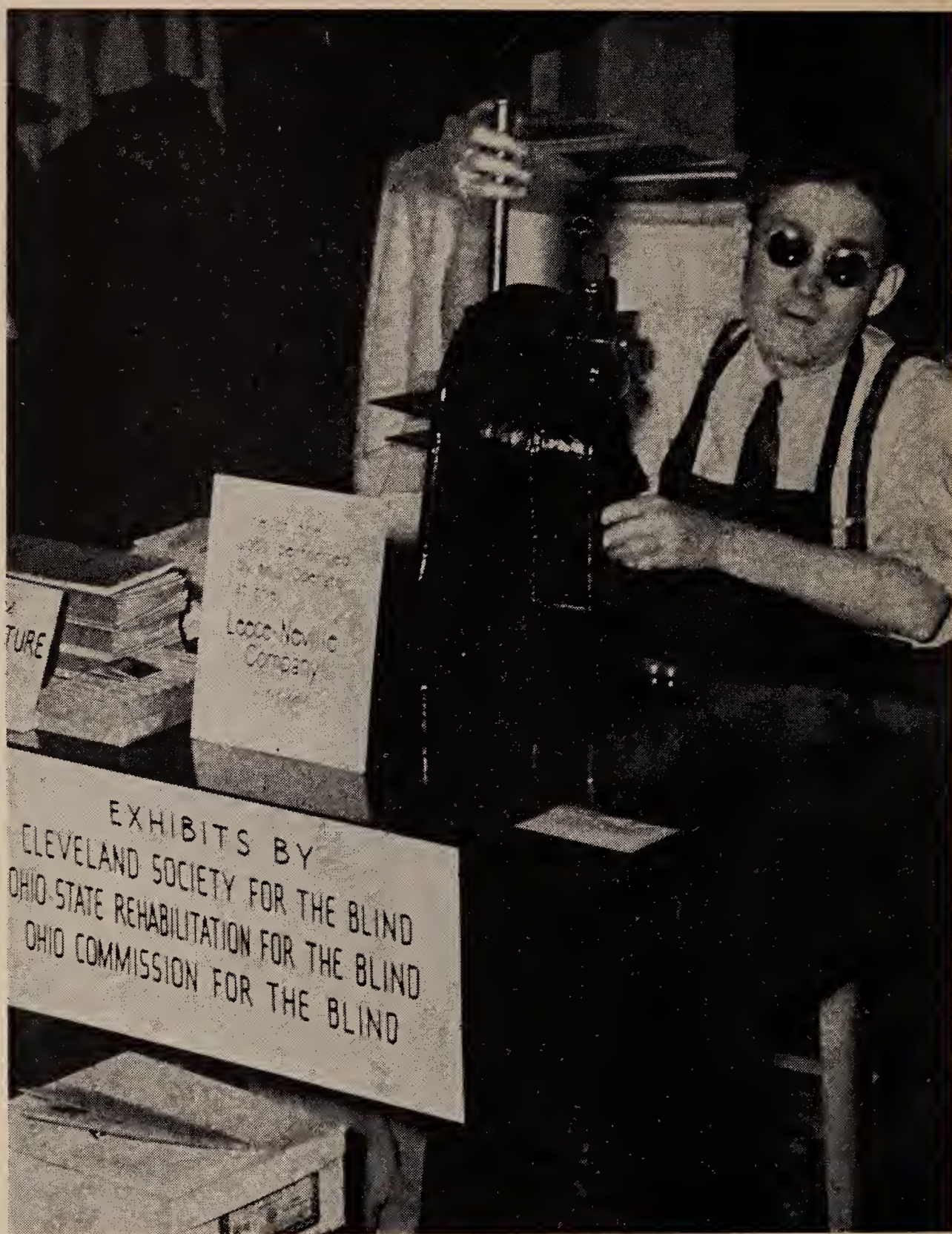
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In another case of a young man in his early twenties with 20/300 vision in the right eye and light perception in the left, a good combination of orienta-

tion and vocational training prepared him to become a competent steam press operator. He expressed an interest in this type of employment in the early



Walter Fela doing a job involving the proper assembly of eight parts comprising a unit of electrical fixtures. Mr. Fela is a regular employee of the Cleveland Society for the Blind. He is totally blind and is able to do this job with a great degree of speed and accuracy.



Larry Petrowsky performing a hand broaching operation on small motor bearings. Mr. Petrowsky is a regular employee of the Leece-Neville Company in Cleveland.

stages of counseling. It was arranged for him to work in an orientation center sufficiently long to learn how the steam

press operated, the safe path of travel in locating the working parts of the machine, and how to distinguish be-

tween the various kinds of cloth without the use of eyesight. Upon completion of this orientation period, the man had shown sufficient interest and progress so that the Rehabilitation Agency was justified in arranging for more specific training on a vocational basis with a dry cleaning establishment, where he was promised steady employment if, at the end of training, he would be able to compete with sighted workers in pressing mens' suits.

After ninety hours of instruction and supervised work by a skilled pressman, the blind trainee was employed at sixty cents per hour and within a month his wage was increased to eighty cents per hour. In another two months period he received a fifteen-cent an hour increase and the employer has indicated that he would be willing to train several other blind persons in a small class if they showed a strong desire to learn the trade.

The field of selling classified advertising has been the answer to the employment problem for another young man with borderline vision. He is quite ambitious and aggressive, and also possesses fine qualities which help him in meeting the public. He has been employed as a salesman with one of the larger daily newspapers in Columbus for about five months, has enjoyed periodic increases in his commission earnings and has met with great success in obtaining large contract orders from downtown stores. He is a high school graduate with one year of college work. Public transportation serves his needs very well in contacting smaller businesses away from the downtown section of the city.

The operation of an electronic sound gauge is offering employment to eight

blind workmen in two different plants in Ohio, The Timken Roller Bearing Company of Canton and Thompson Products, Inc. of Cleveland. On these highly sensitive machines a sightless person is able to inspect, by sound, numerous dimensions to a tolerance of plus or minus one-twenty thousandth of an inch. These devices are so practical that a blind operator can accurately inspect eight thousand parts per eight-hour working day. The machine requires a sighted set-up and, of course, the parts are usually transported to and from the machine by conveyor belts.

The Beau Brummel Tie Co., Inc. of Cincinnati, Ohio is highly pleased with the work of a nineteen-year-old girl who has 20/80 vision with best correction, has restricted fields, and a progressive eye disease. She has been employed as a necktie turner since February of this year and the placement specialist indicated that after she was on the job six weeks she was turning better than eighty dozen ties per day. To date she has increased her daily production above the regular requirements set by the company for the other sighted workers and has also received periodic increases in wages, plus a bonus. She reverses the tie, thus bringing the unfinished edges of the seams to the inside. She slides the tie over a pipe and pushes the wide end of the tie through the pipe with a rod which is manipulated by a hand operated crank. Bar tacks (machine stitches) are later pulled into proper position by hand. The placement specialist has determined that no vision is required to do the job, therefore even though the girl's vision does become progressively worse in the future, her job will not be in jeopardy.

The job of film stripping and developing in the dark room of a production

film processing laboratory is very feasible for a totally blind person. The stripping of the exposed film from the spool, and hanging onto racks, is a simple hand manipulative process, the timing of the developing process is done by the use of a timing instrument which can be set by the blind person so that a bell rings at the expiration of any pre-set time interval. The Photocraft Shop of Dayton, Ohio employed a client of this agency September 30, 1946 on this type of job. This man, in his early thirties, has 15/400 vision in his right eye and light perception in the other; he also wears a hearing aid. He started to work at seventy-five cents per hour and three weeks after he was on the job the employer reported to the placement specialist on a follow-up call that this new employee was out-producing any other sighted worker on the job.

And we can continue to look with pride at the fine production records being rolled up every week by many other visually handicapped, and in many cases totally blind people, working throughout the length and breadth of the State. In mentioning a few more, we would have to include such jobs as counter-man in the White Castle System, record and gift shop operation, poultry raising and egg production, cement block manufacture, house-to-house selling, turret lathe operation,

practicing of law, massage, automotive repair, assistant occupational therapist, newsboy, linen-room houseman, cook, glove-fitter in a glove factory, transcribing and typing, insurance selling, telephone switchboard operation, radio repairing, elevator operators and special teaching and counseling.

Some other plants throughout the State that are endorsing the employment of blind labor by hiring blind labor are Westinghouse at Mansfield, Electric Auto-Lite at Toledo, General Motors at Dayton, Curtiss-Wright at Columbus, American Stove at Cleveland, Estate Stove at Hamilton, Champion Spark Plug at Toledo, and Hoover Vacuum Sweeper at Canton.

The placement staff on the Ohio Rehabilitation program is constantly striving to do a better job of matching the skills and abilities of blind people to the requirements and demands of jobs throughout industry, business and the professions. We realize that a sound placement program can only be developed through the constant efforts of all our staff to grow professionally through in-service training, the analysis of our past errors as well as our accomplishments, and through our constant efforts to educate employers and the general public that it is good business to employ the visually handicapped.



There is not enough darkness in the whole wide world to put out the light of one small candle.

—Cecil Roberts.

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